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TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

The flowers at the Northwest Research-Extension Center proved a popular draw during the center's field day Thursday. Attendees

had the chance to learn about lawn care and other horticultural topics as well as look at the results of the center's flower field trial.

The grass can be greener on your side

By John Van Nostrand

Colby Free Press

Neighbors of those who attended Thursday's Kansas State University Northwest Research Extension Center's field day may be green with envy.

The theme and speakers for the event focused on preserving the lawn and landscape during drought. "Do your research before you plan what you want to do," said Rodney Zimmerman, grounds supervisor of the center located in Colby. "Then give it your best shot."

For the past several years, western Kansas has had significant droughts that have impacted not only farm crops, but residential lawns and landscaping.

Guest speakers were Terry Mannell, Ellis County horticulture assistant; Rodney St. John, Kansas State Extension turfgrass specialist and Alan Stevens, associate professor of horticulture at Kansas State University.

Zimmerman said he uses the ad-

vice of those people to take care of the lawns at the center.

"If you see the stress in your lawn, it's probably too late," Zimmerman said.

When lawns show drought stress depends upon exposure to sun, tree shade and type of grass planted. St. John told the audience two simple ways to tell if grass is drought stressed. If the grass color has a green-gray tone to it, drought is setting in. Another way is just to walk across the lawn with shoes on. If the footprints can be seen, the lawn is dry.

"Compare it with other lawns. See what works," Zimmerman said.

Correctly watering the lawn, when rainfall is limited, is crucial to sustaining the life of the lawn. St. John emphasized to not water the lawn during the middle of the day because that is when evaporation is at its greatest. Even winds can be defeat the purpose of watering the lawn.

St. John said that means people may have to water in late evening or at night to avoid evaporation and

when winds are calm. The cool of the evening also helps grass. Quality of the soil supporting the lawn is also important.

St. John said if the soil is mostly clay, he suggested to shut off watering when the water starts to run off the surface. He said to wait a couple of hours to let the water soak in, then water again.

"A little bit of research can go along way," Zimmerman said.

When to work the ground to improve lawn quality was also discussed. St. John suggested to fertilize and plant grass seed in the fall months. He said if that work is done in the spring, there may not be enough time for the soil to recover before the hot temperatures of summer arrive.

The center in Colby is one of sev-

eral across the state experimenting with plants. Zimmerman said people who work at the centers in eastern Kansas where rainfall is more plentiful, are aware of the situation and challenges of western Kansas.

"They see it is different," he said. "It just shows how this state is not all the same. It is not the same soil, chemistry or rainfall."

Daniel O'Brien, who also works at the center, agreed with Zimmerman.

"This is the prairie," he said. "We have unique stresses with our average rainfall at about 20 inches. Compare that to not far east from here where it is 25 to 30 inches, that can make a difference. Without the irrigation, it looks like a prairie. Water is so critical."

Logan County to vote on liquor use

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

Logan County voters will decide a third time whether they want liquor by the drink in their county.

Commissioners Doug Mackley, Carl Uhrich and Nick Scott decided Tuesday to put the question on the November general election ballot.

"We voted on this back in 1992 and it was defeated," Logan County Clerk Pat Schippers said. "I believe it had been voted on before that and it was defeated."

Schippers, who was elected in 1992, said 963 Logan County voters voted against liquor by the drink and 738 voted in favor of it in 1992.

"The commissioners decided by general consensus to put it on the ballot again this November," she said.

Not to be confused with the 2005 failed passage of alcohol sales on Sunday in both Oakley and throughout the county, voters will decide whether to make the county wet or keep it dry.

The question "Shall sale of alcoholic liquor by the individual drink in Logan County be allowed in public places without a requirement that any portion of their gross receipts be from sales of food?"

"It eliminates the need for membership to clubs like The Bluff," Schippers said.

Tom Groneman, director of the Kansas Department of Revenue Alcoholic Beverage and Control, said the way the question is written, should it pass, would end the state's requirement that 30 percent of gross sales at clubs be food.

Passed in the mid 1980s, the liquor by the drink law allows clubs such as The Bluff and Country Club in Oakley to sell alcohol by the single drink. Liquor stores are required to sell alcohol in its original packaging and requires consumption of the premises of where it is sold.

Groneman said besides Logan County, neighboring counties of Wallace, Gove and Sheridan do not allow liquor by the drink.

Firefighters face charges

From the Goodland Star-News

Goodland's Fire Chief and a volunteer fireman are facing theft charges for picking up cigarettes from a truck roll over on Interstate 70 on Wednesday, July 19.

Fire Chief Scott Gilmer, 46, is facing a misdemeanor charge for attempting to steal a carton of cigarettes from the wreck.

Wednesday Gilmer plead not guilty at Sherman County District Court before Judge Charles Carrol from Atwood. His attorney is Kevin

Berens of St. Francis. Gilmer is on administrative leave from his job.

Neil Normandin, 38, is charged with a felony. He is accused of stealing two boxes of cartons of cigarettes worth more than \$1,000 but less than \$25,000. The felony is a level 9 nonperson felony.

Normandin will make his first court appearance on Tuesday. Bonnie Selby, Sherman County Attorney, said Normandin has turned in his gear and is not answering fire calls.

Area youth inspired by conference

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Thomas County youth recently had the chance to learn how to make a difference in their communities and peers.

Gunner Gawith and Dalaan Organ of Colby and Ryan Edmundson of Brewster attended a Helping American Youth conference in Denver Aug. 3-4. Gunner is a freshman at Colby High School; Dalaan, a seventh grader at Colby Middle School and Ryan is a senior at Brewster High School.

Helping America's Youth was started to help adults connect with youth in the areas of family, school and community. It is a cause championed by First Lady Laura Bush who also attended the conference.

They were nominated to go, along with staff from the Regional Prevention Center to represent the Thomas County Coalition. Center director Sue Evans; Dian Organ, community prevention consultant, and Paige Gawith, Gunner's mother; and Angie Moore of Head Start in Brewster also went.

"We were asked to bring youth along, and the purpose of the conference is to help young men become positive role models," Organ said.

Sue Evans, director of the center,

said it was a privilege to have the boys come along, and for them to have an active role in the conference.

"Usually, when youth are invited, they sometimes don't have the chance to get involved," Evans said.

The boys all came away with ideas.

"I heard stories from other youth, such as a gifted student who dropped out of school to help his brother overcome his problems," Dalaan said.

He said he liked finding out about programs in other towns, such as a program for latch key kids.

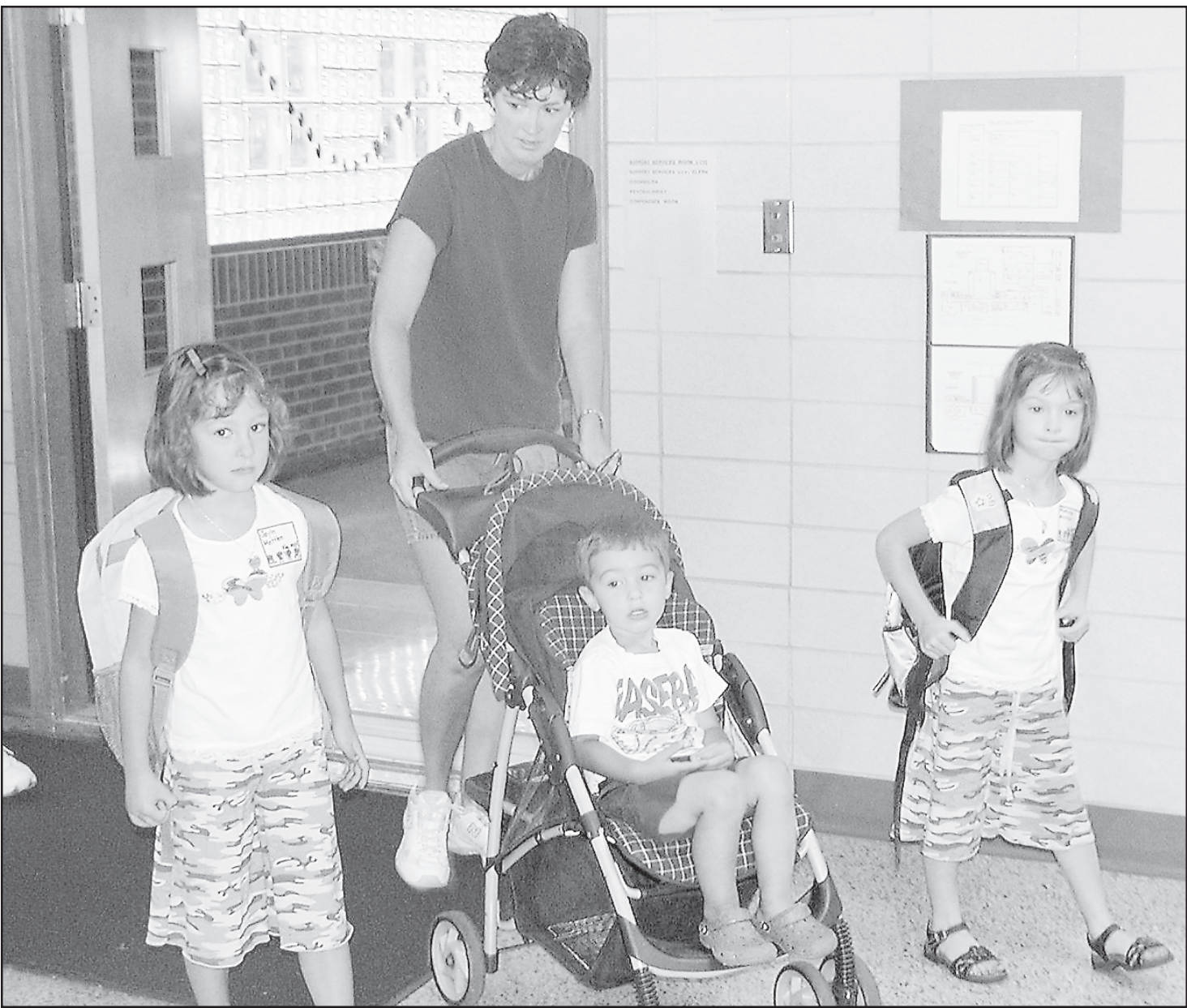
Ryan said they all had one common goal — exchanging ideas to find out what they can do to prevent kids from participating in destructive behavior.

Organ said the conference was one way for people to emphasize the positive instead of the negative.

"It will be a good challenge to accept — getting people in the community to see what they see. By giving a small amount of time to a young person, it can have a positive impact," Organ said.



D. Organ



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Michelle Mettlen and son Beau, center, dropped off daughters Jayln and Makenna for the first day of school Thursday at Colby Grade School.

Makenna and Jayln are kindergartners this year. School for most Thomas County students began Thursday, while classes for Brewster students began last week.